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SUBJECT: VIETNAM: SHAPING ASSISTANCE IN BURMA DEMARCHE DELIVERED;
FOOD SITUATION REMAINS DIRE

REF: STATE 68527

1. (SBU) On June 27, poloff discussed reftel points about shaping post-cyclone humanitarian assistance to Burma with MFA Asia II Department Burma Desk Officer Tran Nguyen Thao. Thao mentioned that the GVN has already urged Burmese authorities to allow foreign relief workers to conduct humanitarian activities in Burma. He said he would pass the information to the MFA leadership for its consideration.

2. (SBU) Thao shared that he had recently returned from the Vietnam-Burma Joint Commission meeting held in Nay Pyi Taw during June 16-18. He said the joint commission normally takes place every two years, although the previous meeting was in 2005. The joint commission deals with bilateral economic cooperation in areas such as agriculture, energy and fisheries. Deputy Foreign Minister Dao Viet Trung led the Vietnamese delegation. The most senior Burmese official was the Secretary of the State Peace Development Council, the "fifth most senior official" in the Burmese government, according to Thao.

3. (SBU) During the joint commission meeting, the Burmese official talked about post-cyclone difficulties, reported Thao. The food situation was described as critical, both because the cyclone destroyed crops in the primary rice growing area and at the same time destroyed the seed stock needed to plant another crop. Thao said the official described people as "still in shock." Concerning the constitutional referendum, Thao mentioned that the Burmese official stated that it was a success and that a multi-party election will be held in 2010, "after which the current regime will hand over power."

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